

THE SAINTS BLESSING THE LORD

NO. 1078

A SERMON
DELIVERED ON LORD'S-DAY MORNING, OCTOBER 20, 1872,
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AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.

“Bless the Lord, O my soul: and all that is within me, bless His holy name.”
Psalms 103:1.

You see here a man talking to himself, a soul with all his soul talking to his soul. Every speaker should learn to soliloquize. His own soul is the first audience a good man ought to think of preaching to. Before we address ourselves to others we should lecture within the doors of our own heart. Indeed, if any man desires to excite the hearts of others in any given direction, he must first stir up himself upon the same matter. He who would make others grateful must begin by saying, “Bless the Lord, O my soul.” David had never risen to the height of saying, “Bless the Lord, you His angels”; or “Bless the Lord, all His works”; if he had not first tuned his own voice to the gladsome music. No man is fit to be a conductor in the choirs of holy song until he has taught himself to sing the song of praise. “Bless the Lord, O my soul,” is the preacher’s preparation in the study, without which he must fail in the pulpit. Self-evident as this is, many persons need to be reminded of it; for they are ready enough to admonish others but forget that true gratitude to God must, like charity, begin at home. There is an old proverb which says, “The cobbler’s wife goes barefoot,” and I am afraid this is too often the case in morals and religion. Preachers ought especially to be jealous of them in this particular, lest, while they are crying aloud to other men to magnify the Lord, they should be shamefully silent themselves. I would this morning glow with the sacred flame of personal thankfulness while I call upon you to bless the holy name of Jehovah, our God. But what is true of preachers is true of all other workers. The tendency among men is, when they grow a little earnest, to expend their zeal upon other people, and frequently in the way of fault-finding. It is wonderfully easy to wax indignant at the indolence, the divisions, the coldness, or the errors of the Christian Church, and to issue our little bulls against her, declaring her to be weighed in our balances and found wanting, as if it mattered one halfpenny to the church what the verdict of our imperfect scales might be. Why, instead of a tract upon the faults of the church, at the present moment, it would be easy to write a folio volume; and when it was written it would be wise to put it in the fire! Friend, mind those beams in your own eyes, and leave the Lord Jesus to clear the motes from the eyes of His Church. Begin at home; there is in-door work to be done. Instead of vainly pointing to the faults of others, pour forth your earnestness in praising God, and say unto your own heart, “Bless the Lord, O my soul: and all that is within *me*, bless His holy name.”

You observe that this preacher, with an audience of one, has a very choice subject; he is exhorting himself to bless God. Now, in a certain sense it is not *possible* for us to bless God; He blesses *us*, and in the same sense we cannot bless Him; He has all things—what can we give Him? When we have given our best, we are compelled to confess, “Of Your own have we given unto You.” But we bless Him by being thankful, by extolling Him for the gifts He has bestowed, by loving Him in consequence of His bounty towards us, and by allowing these emotions of our mind to influence our life so that we speak well of His name, and act so as to glorify Him among our fellow men. In these ways we can bless God, and we know that He accepts such attempts, poor and feeble though they are; God is pleased with our love and thankfulness, and so, speaking after the manner of men, He is blessed by His children’s desires and praises.

Note that the psalmist stirred himself up to bless God’s *name*, by which is meant His character—though, indeed, we may take the word literally, for every name of God is a reason for thankfulness. We will praise Jehovah, the self-existent; we will praise El, the mighty God whose power is on our side; we will praise Him who gives Himself the covenant name of Elohim, and reveals therein the Trinity of His

sacred Unity; we will praise the Shaddai, the all-sufficient God, and magnify Him because out of His fullness have we all received; and whatever other name there is in Scripture, or combination of names, every one shall be exceedingly delightful to our hearts, and we will bless the sacred name! We will bless the Father, from whose everlasting love we received our election unto eternal life; the Father who has begotten us again unto a lively hope by the resurrection of His Son, Jesus Christ, from the dead; we bless the Father of our spirits, who has given to us an inheritance among all them who are set apart, and we bless the Son of God, Jesus our Savior, Christ—anointed to redeem. Our heart dances for joy at every remembrance of Him! There is not a name of Jesus Christ's person, or offices, or relationships which we would forget to bless; whether He is Immanuel, Jesus, or the Word; whether He is Prophet, Priest or King; whether He is Brother, Husband or Friend; whatever name seems His beloved person dear to us, we will bless Him under it. And the Holy Spirit, too, our Comforter, the Paraclete, the heavenly Dove who dwells *within* our hearts in infinite condescension, whom heaven cannot contain, but yet who finds a habitation within the bodies of His servants which are His temples—we will assuredly praise Him! Each one of His influences shall evoke from us grateful praise; if He is like the wind, we will be as Aeolian harps; if He is dew, we will bloom with flowers; if He is a flame, we will glow with zeal; if He is oil, our faces shall shine. In whatever way He moves upon us, we will be responsive to His voice, and while He blesses us, we will bless His holy name!

But if the very name of God is thus blessed to us, certainly the character which lies beneath the name shall be inexpressibly delightful. Select any attribute of God you will and it is a reason for our loving Him. Is He immutable? Blessed be His name, He loves everlastingly! Is He infinite? Then glory be to Him, it is infinite affection which He has bestowed upon us. Is He omnipotent? Then will He put forth all His power for His own beloved. Is He wise? Then He will not err, nor fail to bring us safely to our promised rest. Is He gracious? Then in that grace we find our comfort and defense—whatever there is in God, known or unknown, we will bless. My God, I cannot apprehend You with my understanding, but I comprehend You with my affections, and so if I cannot know You all in my mind, I love You altogether in my heart; my intellect is too narrow to contain You, but my heart expands herself to the infinity of Your Majesty, and loves You, whatever You may be; You are unknown in great measure, but You are not unloved by my poor heart. Thus the psalmist calls upon us to bless the Lord.

I would like to dwell upon those emphatic words in his exhortation—"His *holy* name." Only a holy man can delight in holy things. Holiness is the terror of unholy men; they love sin, and count it liberty, but holiness is to them slavery. If we are saints, we shall bless God for His holiness, and be glad that in Him there is neither spot nor flaw. He is without iniquity—He is just and right. Even to save His people He would not violate His law; even to deliver His own beloved from going down into the pit of hell, He would not turn away from the paths of equity. "Holy, holy, holy Lord God of Sabaoth," is the loftiest cry of cherubim and seraphim in their perfect bliss; it is a joyous song both to the saints on earth, and those in heaven. The pure in heart gaze on the divine holiness with awe-struck joy!

Having thus expounded the words briefly, we will now come to the main point of the exhortation. The psalmist stirs us up to bless God with our whole being, and I pray the Holy Spirit to bring us to that condition this morning. Upon that part of the exhortation we shall now dwell.

I. And our first remark shall be that this exhortation is REMARKABLY COMPREHENSIVE. "Bless the Lord, O my soul"—there is the unity of our nature; "And all that is within me"—there are the diverse powers and faculties which make up the variety of our nature! The *unity* and the *diversity* are both summoned to the delightful employment of magnifying God!

First, *the unity of our nature* is here bid, in its concentration, to yield its whole self to the praise of God. "Bless the Lord, O my soul"—he means thereby not his lips only, not his hands upon the harp strings, not his eyes uplifted towards heaven, but his *soul*, his very *self*, his *truest* self! Never let me present to God the outward and superficial alone, but let me render to Him the inner and the sincere; let me never bring before Him merely the outward senses which my soul uses, but the *soul* which uses these instrumental faculties! No whitewashed sepulchers will please the Lord—"Bless the Lord, O my soul"—let the true ego praise Him, the *essential* I, the vital personality, the soul of my soul, the life of my life! Let me be true to the core to my God; let that which is most truly my own vitality spend itself in blessing the Lord. The soul is our best self. We must not merely bless the Lord with our body, which will soon

become worm's meat, and is but dust at its best; but with our inner, ethereal nature which makes us akin to angels—yes, that which causes it to be said that in the image of God we were created. My *spiritual* nature, my loftiest powers must magnify God; not the voice which sings a hypocritical magnificat, but the heart which *means* it; not the lips which cry Hosanna thoughtlessly—but the *mind* which considers and intelligently worships; not only this little narrow walk of my body would I fill with song, but the infinite, through which my spirit soars on wings of boundless thought; I would make that shoreless region vocal with Jehovah's praise! My real self, my best self shall bless the Lord. But the soul is also our immortal self which will outlast time, and being redeemed by precious blood, shall pass through Judgment, and enter into the worlds unknown forever to dwell at the right hand of God triumphant in His eternal love. My immortal soul, what have you to do with spending your energies upon mortal things? Will you hunt for fleeting shadows while you are most real and abiding? Will you heap up bubbles while you will endure forever in a life contemporary with the existence of God Himself, for He has given you eternal life in His Son Jesus? Bless the Lord, then; so noble a thing as you are should not be occupied with less worthy matters! Raise yourself on all your wings, and like the six-winged cherubim adore your God!

But the words suggest yet another meaning: the soul is our active self, our vigor, our intensity. When we speak of a man's throwing his soul into a thing, we mean that he does it with all his might. We say, "There is no soul in him," by which we do not mean that the man does not live, but that he has no vigor or force of character, no love, no zeal. My most intense nature shall bless the Lord. Not with bated breath and a straitened energy will I lisp forth His praises, but I will pour them forth vehemently and ardently in volumes of impassioned song! Never serve God with a hand loathe for labor which would gladly withdraw itself if it dared; if you do your own business in a lax fashion, yet do not do God's business so; if you go to sleep over anything, let it be over your money-making, or your buying and selling, but always be awake in your service of the Lord! "Bless the Lord, O my soul!" If ever you were thoroughly awakened, awake now! If ever you were all life, all emotion, all energy, all enthusiasm, enter into the same condition again! Let every part of you be full of zeal, sensitive with emotion, nerved with impulse, borne upward by resolution, impelled by onward force! As Samson, when he smote the Philistines hip and thigh, used every muscle, sinew and bone of his body in crushing his adversaries, so you serve God with every force you have. "Bless the Lord, O my soul!" O God, my hand, my tongue, my mind, and my heart shall all adore You—

"Every string shall have its attribute to sing."

My united, concentrated, entire being shall bless You, You infinitely glorious Jehovah!

I pray you, my brothers and sisters, either do not pretend to praise God at all, or praise Him with all your might! If you are Christians, be out-and-out Christians, or let Christianity alone; none hinder the glorious kingdom of Christ so much as these half-and-half men and women who blow hot and cold with the same breath! My brethren, be thorough! Plunge into this stream of life as bathers do who dive to the very bottom, and swim in the broad stream with intense delight. Do this, or else make no profession.

But then, David speaks of *the diverse faculties of our nature*, and writes, "All that is within me bless His holy name." I think the psalm itself, if we had time to comment upon it, might suggest in succession all our mental powers and passions. For instance, when he said, "Bless the Lord, O my soul," he meant, of course, first of all let the heart bless Him, for that is often synonymous with the soul. The affections are to lead the way in the concert of praise, but the psalmist intended, next, to stir up the *memory*, for he goes on to say, "Forget not all His benefits." May I ask you, beloved friends, to remember what God has done for you? Thread the jewels of His grace upon the thread of memory, and hang them about the neck of praise; can you count the leaves of the forest in autumn, or number the small dust of the threshing floor? Then, can you give the sum of His loving-kindnesses? For mercies beyond count praise Him without stint; then let your *conscience* praise Him, for the psalm proceeds to say, "Who forgives all your iniquities." Conscience once weighed your sins and condemned you; now let it weigh the Lord's pardon, and magnify His grace to you. Count the purple drops of Calvary, and say, "Thus my sins were washed away." Let your conscience praise the sin-bearer who has caused it to flow with peace like a river, and to abound in righteousness as the waves of the sea; let your emotions join the sacred choir, for you have this day, if you are like the psalmist, many feelings of delight. Bless Him "Who crowns you with loving-

kindness and tender mercies, and who satisfies your mouth with good things so that your youth is renewed like the eagles.” Is all within you peaceful today? Sing the 23rd Psalm! Let the calm of your spirit sound forth the praises of the Lord upon the pleasant harp and the psaltery. Do your days flow smoothly? Then consecrate the dulcimer to the Lord. Are you joyful this day? Do you feel the exhilaration of delight? Then praise the Lord with the timbrel and dance. On the other hand, is there a contention within? Does conflict disturb your mind? Then praise Him with the sound of the trumpet, for He will go forth with you to the battle, and when you return from the battle, and divide the spoil, then, “Praise Him upon the loud cymbals: praise Him upon the high-sounding cymbals.” Whatever emotional state your soul is found in, let it lead you to bless your Maker’s holy name!

Perhaps, however, just now your thoughts exceed your emotions, for you have been considering the providence of God as you have read the histories of nations, and seen their rise and fall—and have watched the hand of God in men’s lives. So also did David, and he sang, “The Lord executes righteousness and judgment for all who are oppressed.” Let your judgment praise the Judge of all the earth! Let every day’s newspaper give you fresh matter for praise—for every Christian should so read the paper, or not at all. God’s praise is the true end of history; His providence is the pith and marrow of all the stories of the empires of the past; to the man of understanding, the centuries are stanzas of a divine Epic, whereof the great subject is the Lord of hosts in His excellence. Do not forget to bring your *knowledge* to your aid in your song; you have the Scriptures, and you have the Spirit to teach you their inner sense, therefore you can soar above David when he sang, “He made known His ways unto Moses, His acts unto the children of Israel.” He has made known His *Son* unto you, and in you—therefore glorify Him! The harvests of the fields of knowledge should be stored in the garner of adoration; even our human learning should be laid at the Lord’s feet, for the vessels of the tabernacle were made of the gold which Israel brought out of the land of Egypt. We should make each rivulet of knowledge swell our gratitude! Believer, know not anything which you cannot consecrate, or else loathe to know it; whatever fruits, new or old, are stored in your memory, let them be all laid up for the beloved, and no one else. Knowledge should supply the spices and love, the flame, and so the censer of worship should always smoke with fragrant perfume.

Be sure, too, that your faculty of wonder is used in holy things—let your *astonishment* bless God! You cannot measure the distance from the east to the west—you are lost in the immensity before you; but oh, bless God with your wonder as you see your sins thus far removed from you! You cannot tell how high the heavens are above the earth, but let your astonishment at the greatness of creation lead you to adoration, for so great is His mercy toward them who fear Him! Ah, and your very fears, let them bow low before the Lord. Do you fear because you are frail? He remembers that we are dust. Do you tremble at the thought of death? Then praise Him who spares you, though you are before Him as a flower of the field withered by the wind when it passes over you. Magnify from a sense of your insignificance the splendor of that condescending love which pities you, even “As a father pities his children.” As for your *hopes*, sweet are their voices—let them not remain silent; as they peer into the future, let them sing, for “The mercy of the Lord is from everlasting to everlasting upon them who fear Him.” What more could hope desire to make her rouse her choicest minstrelsy? By-and-by we shall be where even the last verses of the psalm will not be above our experience, for we shall see the Lord upon that throne which He has prepared in the heavens; and then we will bid angels that excel in strength, and the entire heavenly ministry to bless the Lord! Happy are we as we anticipate the day, and filled with expectation, cry aloud, “Bless the Lord, O my soul!”

I think you will now perceive that if time permitted, we could bring out every single mental faculty, and show that David has given it scope, as though this psalm were the working out of a problem, and practically showed how each particular power of the soul can praise God. Brothers and sisters, we cannot longer tarry on this point. You know, each of you, what faculty you possess in the greatest strength. I pray you use it for God; you know which phase your soul is in just now; bless God while you are in that mood, whatever it is. “All that is within me,” says the text: then let it be all. Some of us have a vein of humor, and though we try to keep it under restraint, it will peep out. What then? Why let us make it bear the Lord’s yoke! This faculty is not necessarily common or unclean; let it be made a hewer of wood, and a drawer of water for the Lord. On the other hand, some of you have a touch of despondency in your na-

ture; take care to subdue it to the Lord's praise. You are the men to sing those grave melodies which in some respects are the pearls of song; a little pensiveness is good flavoring; the muse is at her best when she is pleasingly melancholy. Praise God, my brothers and sisters, as you are! Larks must not refrain from singing because they are not nightingales, nor must the sparrow refuse to chirp because he cannot emulate the dove. Let every tree of the Lord's planting praise the Lord; clap your hands, you trees of the forests, while fruitful trees and all cedars join in His praise. Both young men and maidens, old men and children, praise the name of the Lord, each one in his peculiar note, for you are all necessary to the perfect harmony! The Lord would not have you borrow your brother's tones, but use "All that is within *you*," all that is peculiar to your own idiosyncrasy, for His glory! Spend all your strength, yes, every atom of it! Keep back nothing, but render all that is within you unto Him! If all that is within you is the Lord's, all that is outside of you, which is yours, will also be His; all your bodily faculties will praise Him, and the outer life will be all for God. Let your house praise Him; beneath its roof may there always be an altar to the God of all the families of Israel. Let your table praise Him; learn to eat and drink to His glory. Let your bed praise Him. Let the bells upon the horses be holiness unto the Lord; let the very garments that you wear, seeing they are the gifts of His charity, commend the Lord to your praise! Yes, let each breath you breathe inspire a new song unto the preserver of men; make your life a psalm, and be yourself a hymn—"All that is within me bless His holy name." The text is comprehensive.

II. Secondly, the suggestion of the text is MOST REASONABLE, for first, God has created all that is within us except the sin which mars us. Every faculty, susceptibility, power or passion, is of the Lord's fashioning. It were not ours to feel, to think, to hope, to judge, to tear, to trust, to know, or to imagine if He had not granted us the power! Who should own the house but the builder? Who should have the harvest but the farmer? Who should receive the obedience of the child but the father? To whom, then, O my soul, should you render the homage of your nature, but to Him who made you all that you are? Moreover, the Lord has redeemed our entire manhood; when we had gone astray, and all our faculties, like lost sheep, had taken, each one, its own several roads of sin, Christ came into the world and redeemed our entire nature—spirit, soul, body; not a part of the man, but our complete humanity! Jesus Christ did not die for our souls only, but for our bodies, too; and though at this present, "The body is dead because of sin," and therefore we suffer pain and disease, yet the spirit is already life because of His righteousness, and in its life we have a sure guarantee of the quickening of our mortal bodies in the day of the adoption, to wit the redemption of *our body*. We shall, at the coming of the Lord, be wholly restored in body and soul by the Lord's divine power; therefore let body and soul praise Him who has redeemed both by His most precious blood! My Body, you are not mine to pamper you; you are my Lord's to *serve* Him, for His blood has paid your ransom price, and secured your resurrection. My soul, my Spirit, whatever faculty you have, Christ's blood is on all, therefore you are not your own; it would be sad, indeed, even to think of having an unredeemed will, or an unredeemed judgment, but it is not so—every faculty is emancipated by a ransom. If the blood on the lintel has saved the house, then it has saved every room; and every chamber of ours should be consecrated to the Redeemer's praise!

Brothers and sisters, the Lord has given innumerable blessings to every part of our nature. We spoke of them just now, one by one, and it would be very easy to show that all our faculties are the recipients of blessing, and therefore they should all bless God in return. Every pipe of the organ should yield its quota of sound. As in an eagle, every bone, muscle and feather is made with a view to flight, so is every part of a regenerate man created for praise; as all the rivers run into the sea, so all our powers should praise the Lord. To prove that this is reasonable, let me ask one single question: If we do not devote all that is within us to the glory of God, which part is it that we should leave unconsecrated? And being less unconsecrated to God, what should we do with it? It would be impossible to give a proper answer to this question! An unconsecrated part in a believer's manhood would become a nest of hornets, or, what if I say a den of devils out of which evils would come forth to prowl over our entire being? A faculty unsanctified would be a leprous spot, a valley of Gehennam, a Dead Sea, a lair of pestilence; to be sanctified—spirit, soul, and body—is essential to us, and we must have it! It is but our reasonable service that that which is within us must bless God's holy name; to withhold part of the price were robbery; to reserve part of our territory from our King would be treason!

III. But I will not further insist that it is reasonable, for I have further to assert that it is NECESSARY. It is necessary that the whole nature bless God, for at its best, when all engaged in the service, it fails to compass the work, and falls short of Jehovah's praise. All the man, with all his might—always occupied in all ways in blessing God, would still be no more than a whisper in comparison with the thunder of praise which the Lord deserves! One of our poets used a singular expression which the fact more than justifies. He said—

*“But ah, eternity's too short
To utter all Your praise.”*

It is so. The whole company of God's creatures would be incapable of reflecting the whole of the divine glory, and such mercy and grace does God show to us in the gift of His dear Son, that the church militant, and the church triumphant, together, are not equal to well-deserved praise! Do not, therefore, let us insult the Lord with half, when the whole is not enough! Let us not bring Him the tithe, when, if we had 10 times as much, we could not magnify Him as we should! We must, moreover, give the Lord *all*, because divided powers in every case lead to failure. The men who have succeeded in anything have almost always been men of one thing; he who is jack-of-all-trades is master of none; he who can do a little of this, and a little of that, never does much of any one thing. The fact is, there is only water enough in the brook of our manhood to drive one wheel, and if we divide it into many trickling runners, we shall accomplish nothing! The right thing is to dam up all our forces, and allow them to spend themselves in one direction, and so pour them all forth upon the constantly revolving wheel of praise to God. How can we afford life to evaporate in trifles when one aim, only, is worthy of our immortal being?

We who have been baptized upon profession of our faith were taught in that solemn ordinance to bless the Lord with our entire being, for we were not sprinkled here or there—but we were, in the outward sign—*buried* with the Lord Jesus in baptism unto death; and we were immersed into the name of the Triune God. If our baptism meant anything, it declared that we were henceforth dead to the world, and owned no life but that which came to us by the way of the resurrection of Jesus. Over our heads the liquid water flowed, for we resigned the brain with all its powers of thought to Jesus; over the heart, the veins, the hands, the feet, the eyes, the ears, the mouth, the significant element poured itself; symbol of that universal consecration which deluges all the inward nature of every sanctified believer. My baptized brothers and sisters, I charge you not to belie your profession!

Remember, beloved, this one telling argument, that Jesus Christ will have all of us or nothing; and He will have us sincere, earnest and intense, or He will not have us at all. I see the Master at the table, and His servants place before Him various meats that He may eat and be satisfied. He tastes the cold meats, and He eats of the bread, hot from the oven. But as for tepid drinks, and half-baked cakes, He puts them away with disgust; He will look on you who are cold, and are mourning your coldness, and He will give you heat; And He will look on you who are hot and serve Him with the best you have; but of the middle-man, the lukewarm, He says, “I will spew you out of My mouth.” Jesus cannot bear lukewarm religion! He is sick of it! The religion of this present time is much of it, rather nauseating to the Savior than acceptable to Him; if Baal is God, serve him; but if God is God, serve Him truly! Let there be no mockery, but be true to the core; be thorough; throw your soul into your religion! I charge you, stand back awhile and count the cost, for if you wish to give to Christ a little, and to Baal a little, you shall be cast away and utterly rejected; the Lord of heaven will have nothing to do with you! Bless the Lord, then, all that is within me, for only such sincere and undivided homage can be accepted of the Lord.

IV. We must pass on, and ask your attention yet further to the next remark; whole-hearted praise is BENEFICIAL. It is beneficial to us. To be whole-hearted in the praise of God is to elevate our faculties; there can be no doubt whatever that many a man's powers have been debased by the objectives which he has pursued. Poets who might have been great poets have missed the highest seats upon Parnassus because they have selected trivial topics, or gross and impure themes, and, therefore, the best features of their poems have never been fully developed. “Bless the Lord, O my soul,” and you will be a man to the fullness of your capacity! This is the way to reach the loftiest peak of human attainment; consecration is culture; to praise is to learn; to bless God is also of preventive usefulness to us; we cannot bless God, and at the same time idolize ourselves! Praise preserves us from being envious of others, for by blessing

God for all we have, we learn to bless God for what other people have, too. I reckon it to be a great part of praise to be thankful to God for making better men than myself. If we are always blessing the Lord, this will save us from murmuring—the spirit of discontent will be ejected by the spirit of thankfulness, and this will also deliver us from laziness, for if all our powers magnify the Most High, we shall scorn the soft couch of ease, and seek the place of service, that we may bring more honor to our Master. Nothing beautifies a man like praising God!

There is a bath in Germany which enamels the bathers, and if it does not make them beautiful forever, yet, at least beautiful for a while; but to plunge our whole nature in adoration of our God is far more beautifying! I was told by one who watched the revivals in the north of Ireland years ago, that he never saw the human face look so lovely as when it was lit up with the joy of the Holy Spirit during those times of refreshing. You know how pleasing landscapes appear when the sun shines upon them? The scenery has not half its charms till the sun, “Of this great world, both eye and soul,” enriches the view with his wealth of color, and makes all things glow with God’s glory! Praise is the sunlight of life. Some of you conceal beneath a cloud of indifference all the beauty of your characters; you are like the lovely mountains of Cumberland, when they are enshrouded in mist—little or nothing attractive is visible in you. Pray that divine grace, like a heavenly wind, would drive off the fogs of our despondency and discontent, and shed the sunlight of true praise all over our soul; then the beauty of our new-created man will be discerned! May we have many lovely, praiseful Christians in this church—and may they abound in other churches, also!

While whole-hearted praise is beneficial to us, it is also useful to others. I am persuaded many souls are converted by the cheerful conversation of Christians, and many already converted are greatly strengthened by the holy joy of their brothers and sisters. You cannot do the right thing more effectually than by a happy consecrated life spent in blessing God; imagine not that thoughtfulness is the fairest flower of piety. There have been, in the French Church especially, eminent Christians who appear to have realized a likeness to Christ more in the sorrow which marred His visage, than in the joy which sustained His spirit. Jesus sorrowed that *we* might rejoice! We are no more to imitate Him in His griefs than in His five wounds! It is truly Christian-like to rejoice in the Lord at all times; we should seek to have Christ’s joy fulfilled in ourselves; if there is anything that is cheerful, joyous, dewy, bright, full of heaven—it is the life of a man who blesses God all his days! This is the way to win souls! We shall not catch these flies with vinegar; we must use honey; we shall not bring men and women into the church by putting into the window of Christ’s shops, coffins and crepe, shrouds, and standing at the door like mutes. No, we must tell the Truth of God, and show sinners the best robe, the wedding ring, and the silver sandals of joy and gladness. We must sing—

*“The men of grace have found
Glory began below!
Celestial truths on earthly ground
From faith and hope do grow!”*

I read in Thomas Cooper’s, “*Plain Talk*,” a story of a class leader who was in a sad state of mind, and therefore gave out in the class the hymn—

*“Ah, where should I go,
Burdened, and sick, and faint.”*

To one seemed inclined to sing, therefore, the leader asked a certain brother Martin to start a tune. “No, no,” said Martin, “I’m neither burdened, nor sick nor faint; I’ll start no tune, not I!” “Well, then, brother Martin,” said the leader, “Give out a verse yourself.” Whereupon Martin, with all the power of his lungs, sang—

*“Oh for a thousand tongues to sing
My great Redeemer’s praise.”*

Ah, that’s the hymn, my brothers and sisters; keep to that! If you have not a thousand tongues, at least let the one you have continue to bless the Lord while you have any being!

V. Lastly, all this is PREPARATORY. If we can attain to constant praise now, it will prepare us for all that awaits us. We do not know what will happen to us between this and heaven, but we can easily prognosticate the aim and result of all that will occur. We are harps which will be tuned in all their

strings for the concerts of the blessed; the tuner is putting us in order; He sweeps His hands along the strings; there is a jar from every note, so He begins, first, with one string, and then goes to another; He continues at each string till He hears the exact note. The last time you were ill, one of your strings was tuned; the last time you had a bad debt, or trembled at declining business, another string was tuned. And so, between now and heaven, you will have every string set in order, and you will not enter heaven till all are in tune! Did you ever go to a place where they make pianos, and expect to hear sweet music? The tuning room is enough to drive a man mad—and in the factory you hear the screeching of saws and the noise of hammers—and you say, “I thought this was a place where they made pianos.” Yes, so it is, but it is not the place where they *play* them! On earth is the place where God makes musical instruments, and tunes them; and between now and heaven He will put all that is within them into fit condition for blessing and praising His name eternally! In heaven every part of the man will bless God without any difficulty; no need for a preacher there to exhort you! No need for you to talk to yourself and say, “Bless the Lord, O my soul”; you will do it as naturally as now you breathe! You never take any consideration as to how often you shall breathe, and you have no plan laid down as to when your blood shall circulate because these matters come naturally to you. And in heaven it will be your nature to praise God; you will *breathe* praise; you will live in an atmosphere of adoration, and like those angels who for many an age, day without night, have circled the Throne of Jehovah rejoicing, so will you! But I will not speak much on that, or you will want to be flying away to our own dear country—

*“Where we shall see His face,
And never, never sin;
But from the rivers of His grace
Drink endless pleasures in.”*

You must stay a little while longer in the tents of Kedar, and mingle with the men of soul-distressing Mesekh. But till the day breaks and the shadows flee away, say unto your soul, “Bless the Lord, O my soul: and all that is within me, bless His holy name.”

I wish all my hearers could do this, but some of you cannot bless God at all, and it would be idle for me to tell you to do it, for you are dead in your sins. I read a story the other day of a woman convicted of her state by a singular dream; she dreamed she saw her minister standing in the midst of a number of flowerpots which he was watering, and she thought that she was one of the flowerpots; but the minister passed her by and said, “It is no use watering that plant, for it is dead.” This morning I must pass by the dead plants; oh, sinner, can you bear this? I do not invite you to sing the believer’s song of praise—can you bear to be left out? Though I pass you by, I pray the Lord to look upon you, and say to you—“Live!” And before I close I must tell you something else which is meant for dead sinners as well as living saints; it is this—“Believe in the Lord Jesus Christ, and you shall be saved!” God grant to you that saving faith for Christ’s sake. Amen.

PORTION OF SCRIPTURE READ BEFORE SERMON—PSALM 1-3.

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